

William Short to Thomas Jefferson, November 6, 1807, from the Thomas Jefferson and William Short Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

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Philadelphia Nov. 6-07

Dear Sir,

Since my last of Oct. 3. from N. York (which I hope was recieved) I have come to this place. I have not yet fixed my winter-quarters here, but probably shall do so for the same reasons heretofore, the greater convenience of accomodation. If any change of views however should have taken place since I last had the pleasure of hearing from you, & you should advise my endeavouring to place myself "rectus in Curea" I should certainly assent to the change of residence by way of experiment, upon such authority. Submitting at the same time, whether being at a distance would not have the advantage of the nomination appearing to come from above, & without sollicitation. If a personal acquaintance be a sine qua non I should have great fear, feeling little confidence in any advantage I could hope to derive from such a source & particularly with a body where to please some, would be perhaps the sure means of displeasing others. Indeed I can have no hope from them but in the "adopte de confiance." And my duty would be to do something of which I have little doubt, that should prevent either the proposer or the adopters repenting of what they had done.

I observe from your message that the business with Spain is not yet settled. I cannot help thinking that you would have been able to have spoken differently if your constitutional

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advisors could have been brought to have adopted your sentiments as to an umpire. You state, I observe, that the subject may under given circumstances be resumed. Would it not be worth while to give it every chance of success and would not an umpire to two discordant ministers be of such advantage, as might be made sensible to the heads of departments? The negotiation with Spain would be a matter of predilection with me, & it grows out of one in which I certainly had priority. So far as the reigning minister in Spain, or the present Minister of Foreign affairs at Paris may be efficient I will say without hesitation, & I can say it without vanity, there is not one of my countrymen, who I believe would have the same advantage that I would.

From your message it appears that war is still suspended in dubio. Would it be the wish of government in that case to make loans abroad? If so I would advise their beginning now to prepare for it. It can be better done before than after war commenced. If fortunately the loan should not be wanted, it might be advantageously applied to the purchase of the domestic debt, or the extinction of the new connected 6 pct. stock, which admits of re-imbursement. The loans in Holland would not now I shd. suppose notwithstanding the changes since I was there exceed 5 pct. with a fraction of addition for charges. This kind of business though disagreeable to me, I was forced to make myself master of & I managed it in such a manner as to reduce the charges of the loans so low, that Genl. Washington, thought it unreasonable, & agreed at the solicitation of the bankers, to allow them an increase. This will appear in the correspondence of the then Sec. of the Treasury with me. I would not go there merely as a director of loans-but if connected with such a character of diplomacy as I could consent to put on, I would undertake to direct the business as formerly, though it would under all circumstances be disagreeable to me. If such circumstances should occur as should make you think it an object to pay this compliment to the brother of the Director general of continental Europe, you might perhaps determine to send there also a Min. Plenipo. There is at present you know a dissatisfaction between the two brothers. Still the Emperor is fond of everything that shews an acknowledgement of his family as sovereign, by those who are not under his control.

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This alone could be inducement. The business of the loans could be superintended from Paris-with a short excursion to Amsterdam from time to time. After the example of Mr. Adams I signed every obligation of 1000 florins-so that each loan took 3000 signatures-but this did not appear absolutely necessary.

I think it probable Genl. Moreau will visit you this winter. He told me on his arrival here that he had a letter for you. I think from lafayette-he talked of sending it on to you & said he should not yet go himself. I know not how far his presence at Washington would be agreeable-nor whether his advice would be wished on the subject of preparation for defensive or active war. Genl. Dearborn arrived in New York last summer before my departure, I went to wait on him but did not

find him at home, & I left the City without seeing him. I intended if I had seen him, to have asked him if he needed to have Moreau's opinion, & to have brought them together in that case-but Moreau is intimate with a Genl. Stevens, who invited him, I think he told me, to accompany the commissioners on a visit to the narrows with a view to defence. He did not go that day, under the pretence of being engaged in writing to France. I know not if he saw them afterwards. His ideas as to the defence of the harbor are conformable to those of Bureau de Puzy. As to the organisation of militia I should suppose his ideas would be useful. He appears to me to be luminous on every military subject, & as it were inspired. But until you can engage Congress to adopt some mode of classification, similar to what you suggested last year, it will be impossible to form any complete system. If it should be said for instance that every Citizen shall owe to his Country five years, say from 20 to 25, during which he shall stand on requisition, or as it were in the front rank, to be called on emergency, it might be possible to make this quota fit for service & in case of need & flagrant war, the remainder of all ages might be called on-necessity would then make them soldiers. At present whilst it is attempted to prepare all from sixteen to sixty, nothing is done, except in a few volunteer instances. It is the old proverb of 'he who embraces too

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much holds nothing.' I have seen & heard a great deal of this in my late excursion & am confirmed in this opinion.

My letter is longer than I intended, but still I must enquire if you found out or could advice me to any person for the direction of Indian Camp. You were so good as to say you would enquire when at Monticello. I saw at New York a person from Virginia, who told me that small tenants in the manner of mine would do the lands more injury than the value of rents received. He advised me to let it remain unoccupied, rather than with tenants in this way. Excuse this trouble & believe me with sentiments of high respect & attachment.

Your obedt. servt. W. Short

RC (Jefferson Papers, DLC)